

The Devil Is in the Details: Abstract Versus Concrete Construals of Multiculturalism Differentially Impact Intergroup Relations

Kumar Yogeeswaran
University of Canterbury

Nilanjana Dasgupta
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Three experiments integrated several theories in psychology and sociology to identify the conditions under which multiculturalism has positive versus negative effects on majority group members' attitudes and behavioral intentions toward ethnic minorities. On the basis of social cognitive construal theories, we predicted and found that construing multiculturalism in abstract terms by highlighting its broad goals reduced White Americans' prejudice toward ethnic minorities relative to a control condition, whereas construing multiculturalism in concrete terms by highlighting specific ways in which its goals can be achieved increased White Americans' prejudice relative to the same control (Experiments 1 and 2). Using social identity threat research, we found that construing multiculturalism in abstract terms decreased the extent to which diversity was seen as threatening national identity, whereas construing it in concrete terms increased the extent to which diversity was seen as threatening national identity; threat in turn fueled prejudice (Experiments 2 and 3). Perceivers' political orientation moderated the effects of multiculturalism construals on prejudicial attitudes and social distancing behavioral intentions (Experiment 3). Symbolic threat to national identity but not realistic threat to national resources mediated these effects. Collectively, these experiments demonstrate when multiculturalism leads to positive versus negative intergroup outcomes, why, and how political orientation shapes prejudice and behavioral intentions toward ethnic minorities.

Keywords: multiculturalism, prejudice, national identity, construal, political ideology

The time is overdue for the people of Canada to become more aware of the rich tradition of the many cultures we have in Canada. Canada's citizens come from almost every country in the world, and bring with them every major world religion and language. This cultural diversity endows all Canadians with a great variety of human experience. The government regards this as a heritage to treasure and believes that Canada would be the poorer if we adopted assimilation programs forcing our citizens to forsake and forget the cultures they have brought to us.

—Pierre Trudeau, 1971

What happens when people of different ethnic origins, speaking different languages and professing different religions, settle in the same geographical locality and live under the same political sovereignty? Unless a common purpose binds them together, tribal antagonisms will drive them apart. . . . The historic idea of a unifying

American identity is now in peril in many arenas—in our politics, our voluntary organizations, our churches, our language. And in no arena is the rejection of an overriding national identity more crucial than in our system of education.

—Arthur Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society*

The two quotes above illustrate two fundamentally different construals of multiculturalism. The first quote, by former Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau, is abstract and global in its discussion of the benefits of multiculturalism to national identity; it mentions the “rich tradition of many cultures” and “cultural diversity” while staying focused on the broad goals of multiculturalism. In contrast, the second quote, by American historian Arthur Schlesinger (1992), is concrete and specific in its discussion of the challenges

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Kumar Yogeeswaran, Department of Psychology, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand; Nilanjana Dasgupta, Department of Psychology, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Kumar Yogeeswaran, Department of Psychology, University of Canterbury, Christchurch 8140, New Zealand. E-mail: kumar.yogeeswaran@canterbury.ac.nz

of “people of different ethnic origins, speaking different languages and professing different religions . . . liv[ing] under the same political sovereignty” (p. 13). Schlesinger expressed concern about some specific effects of multiculturalism on national politics, national language, public education, and national identity. Another difference between the two quotes is the valence of each. As when using the lens of a camera, when people zoom out and consider why multiculturalism might benefit their nation in abstract terms, they may perceive it quite favorably. However, when people zoom in and consider how multiculturalism can be achieved in concrete terms, they may perceive it quite unfavorably.

In recent decades, immigrant nations such as the United States (U.S.) have witnessed contentious debate about how to best achieve national unity amid growing cultural diversity. This is evident when one considers contemporary disagreements over immigration, affirmative action, bilingual education, and religious dress in public places, among other hot button issues. Historically, assimilationist ideologies were dominant in the U.S. Such ideologies called for citizens to shed their ethnocultural identities and embrace values, identities, and practices shared by mainstream society as a means of achieving national cohesion (Gordon, 1964; Hirschman, 1983; Schlesinger, 1992; Schmidt, 1997). However, starting in the 1970s, an alternative ideology—multiculturalism—began to gain traction. It argued that the recognition and celebration of unique cultural identities was fundamental for harmonious intergroup relations in pluralistic nations (Berry, Kalin, & Taylor, 1977; Glazer & Moynihan, 1970; Moghaddam, 2008; Plaut, 2010; Taylor, 1991).

Reaction to multiculturalism has been mixed, as evident in social psychological research on the topic. One stream of empirical research has demonstrated that multiculturalism has positive effects that benefit positive intergroup relations in ethnically diverse nations (e.g., Plaut, Thomas, & Goren, 2009; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004; Todd & Galinsky, 2012; Verkuyten, 2005; Vorauer, Gagnon, & Sasaki, 2009; Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2000), while another stream of research has demonstrated that multiculturalism can have negative consequences because majority group members often resist and oppose such policies (e.g., Citrin, Sears, Muste, & Wong, 2001; Ginges & Cairns, 2000; Morrison, Plaut, & Ybarra, 2010; Plaut, Garnett, Buffardi, & Sanchez-Burks, 2011; Schlesinger, 1992; Unzueta & Binning, 2010; summarized in detail in the next section). Our goal in the present research is to reconcile these divergent findings with a new theoretical framework.

We propose that construing multiculturalism in abstract terms by highlighting its broad goals will have profoundly different effects on majority group members’ attitudes and behavioral intentions toward ethnic minorities than will construing the same ideology in concrete terms by highlighting how those goals can be achieved. We arrived at this hypothesis by synthesizing four literatures that have been relatively separate in the past: social cognitive construal theories, sociological research on the “principle-implementation gap,” social identity threat research, and political psychology research on ideology. The synthesis of these literatures resulted in a new theoretical framework that sheds light on three research questions. First, does construing multiculturalism in abstract versus concrete terms differentially impact majority group’s attitudes and behavioral intentions toward ethnic minorities? Second, if so,

does perceived threat serve as an important psychological process that mediates these effects and, if so, what type of threat? Third, do individual differences in political orientation moderate reactions to different construals of multiculturalism? In the sections that follow, we unpack how these varied literatures help address each of the questions outlined above.

Discrepant Findings on Multiculturalism

Although from an ideological perspective one might argue for or against multiculturalism, from a scientific perspective it is more important to rely on empirical evidence on the topic. Empirical research suggests that multiculturalism is beneficial for intergroup relations in terms of interethnic attitudes, behavior, and public policy support (Correll, Park, & Smith, 2008; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, & Chiu, 2008; Plaut et al., 2009; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004; Ryan, Hunt, Weible, Peterson, & Casas, 2007; Todd & Galinsky, 2012; Verkuyten, 2005, 2009; Vorauer et al., 2009; Wolsko, Park, & Judd, 2006; Wolsko et al., 2000). For example, priming White participants with multiculturalism elicits more favorable attitudes toward ethnic minority groups both explicitly and implicitly (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004; Wolsko et al., 2000). Multiculturalism also enhances positive interracial behavior in dyadic interactions between majority and minority group members (Vorauer et al., 2009) and can elicit greater perspective taking (Todd & Galinsky, 2012). Moreover, endorsement of multiculturalism among White Americans predicts greater support for public policies that benefit ethnic minorities, such as affirmative action, inclusive immigration policies, and less stringent English standards (Wolsko et al., 2006). Finally, the more White Americans in a professional organization endorse multiculturalism, the more motivated and psychologically engaged their ethnic minority colleagues feel, illustrating that acceptance of multiculturalism by the majority group directly benefits the minority (Plaut et al., 2009). Collectively, these findings suggest that multiculturalism ought to be an effective strategy for achieving positive intergroup relations in nations comprising diverse social groups.

However, other research suggests that multiculturalism does not always promote positive intergroup relations, because its implementation is obstructed by the majority. For example, several studies have shown that White Americans resist multiculturalism in educational settings, organizations, and public opinion polls (Citrin et al., 2001; Schofield, 2009; Thomas & Plaut, 2008; Verkuyten, 2009). Opposition by Whites to multiculturalism policies in the workplace is often driven by their perception that this ideology excludes them and their racial/ethnic group (Plaut et al., 2011; also see Unzueta & Binning, 2010). Moreover, Whites tend to view multiculturalism as a threat to ingroup values and their nation as a whole (Ginges & Cairns, 2000; Morrison et al., 2010; Verkuyten, 2009; also see Schlesinger, 1992; Schmidt, 1997). Majority group members also reject ethnic minorities who personify multiculturalism at least partially because these individuals are seen as threatening the national group (Kaiser & Pratt-Hyatt, 2009; Yogeeswaran, Adelman, Parker, & Dasgupta, in press; Yogeeswaran, Dasgupta, Adelman, Eccleston, & Parker, 2011; Yogeeswaran, Dasgupta, & Gomez, 2012). Finally, in terms of interracial interactions, after being primed with multiculturalism, White

individuals behave in a hostile manner toward ethnic minority partners who disagree with them (Vorauer & Sasaki, 2011).

Taken together, some of the research above suggests that multiculturalism is beneficial for intergroup relations especially when people focus on its broad ideals (e.g., Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004; Todd & Galinsky, 2012; Vorauer et al., 2009; Wolsko et al., 2000), but other research suggests that multiculturalism faces resistance and can backfire especially when people focus on its specific instantiations (e.g., Kaiser & Pratt-Hyatt, 2009; Plaut et al., 2011; Yogeeswaran et al., 2011, 2012). Our goal is to seek a resolution to the mixed findings by identifying conditions that produce positive versus negative outcomes and by investigating process-oriented reasons for them. To do so, we draw on insights from two literatures that have been completely separate thus far: (a) social cognitive theories of abstract versus concrete construals and their effects on information processing and (b) sociological and psychological research on the principle-implementation gap.

Construal Theories and Their Application to Multiculturalism

Construal theories have demonstrated that events, actions, and goals can be construed at varying levels of abstraction. At one end of the spectrum, they may be construed at an abstract level by focusing on the primary goal (Why is this goal important? Why is this action being performed?). At the other end of the spectrum, the same action, event, or goal may be construed at a concrete level by focusing on its specific details (How can this goal be achieved? What are the steps necessary to achieve this action? See Förster, 2009; Förster, Liberman, & Kuschel, 2008; Freitas, Gollwitzer, & Trope, 2004; Fujita, Trope, Liberman, & Levin-Sagi, 2006; Luguri, Napier, & Dovidio, 2012; McCrea, Wieber, & Myers, 2012; Smith, Wigboldus, & Dijksterhuis, 2008; Trope & Liberman, 2010; Vallacher & Wegner, 1987, 1989). For example, the action of paying rent can be construed abstractly as “maintaining a place to live” or more concretely as “writing a check” (Levy, Freitas, & Salovey, 2002; Vallacher & Wegner, 1987). Abstract construals take a bird’s-eye view and mentally zoom out to capture the big picture and ask the question—*why* is this action or goal important? In contrast, concrete construals mentally zoom in to focus on specific details and ask the question—*how* can this goal or action be accomplished? (Freitas et al., 2004; Fujita et al., 2006; McCrea et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2008; Trope & Liberman, 2010; Vallacher & Wegner, 1987).

Empirical research shows that people’s tendency to describe their goals and actions in abstract versus concrete ways systematically affect a host of judgments, attitudes, and behaviors (Emons, 1992; Levy et al., 2002; Luguri et al., 2012; McCrea et al., 2012; Vallacher & Wegner, 1987, 1989; also see Trope & Liberman, 2010). For example, people who have a chronic tendency to view actions and goals concretely (as opposed to abstractly) are more likely to perceive *dissimilarity* between the self and other, less likely to take the perspective of dissimilar others, less likely to feel empathy for others, and show less willingness to help these dissimilar others (Levy et al., 2002). Similarly, experimentally priming concrete construals leads to greater perceived difference between two people, two countries, or two objects, whereas priming abstract construals lead to greater perceived similarity between

two people, two countries or two objects (all relative to controls; Förster, 2009). Along the same lines, priming abstract relative to concrete mindsets leads perceivers to focus on the similarity between a target and salient social category, eliciting more inclusive categorization, which in turn leads to more category-based judgments of the target (McCrea et al., 2012). Given that concrete construals of goals, events, and ideas increase perceptions of dissimilarity and reduce empathy and prosocial motivations whereas abstract construals do the opposite, we apply this knowledge to multiculturalism research. Does varying construals of multiculturalism to be abstract or concrete have differential effects on majority group members’ attitudes and behavioral intentions toward ethnic minority groups?

At face value, this question resembles research exploring the “principle-implementation gap,” which has demonstrated that people sometimes support abstract principles of racial equality while simultaneously opposing concrete policies that help achieve such a goal (Dixon, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2007; Dixon et al., 2010; Hughes & Tuch, 2000; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Krysan, 1997; Tuch & Hughes, 1996). The present investigation is complementary and differs from principle-implementation research in two important ways. First, principle-implementation work uses descriptive surveys to document the gap between attitudes toward abstract principles of racial equality versus attitudes toward concrete implementation strategies to achieve equality. This work does not, however, experimentally manipulate the *same* ideology to highlight its abstract principles in one case versus concrete implementation strategies in another case and test if these two construals *cause* systematic differences in perceivers’ attitudes and behavioral intentions toward ethnic minorities; doing this is the first goal of the present research. Although the present research is interested in the effect of multiculturalism construals on *attitudes and intentions toward ethnic minorities*, the principle-implementation literature is interested in *attitudes toward principles and policies*.

Second, the present research seeks to identify the underlying psychological process explaining why abstract versus concrete construals of multiculturalism differentially impact ethnic minority attitudes and behavioral intentions by focusing on social identity threat as an explanatory mediator. We investigate whether abstract versus concrete construals of multiculturalism evoke differential levels of social identity threat. We predict that focusing attention on the abstract goal of multiculturalism will be less threatening to American values and national character; less threat, in turn, will elicit less prejudice against ethnic minority groups. In contrast, focusing on concrete ways to achieve multiculturalism will be more threatening to national identity, which in turn will elicit more prejudice. In terms of the type of threat, we expect, symbolic threat to national identity will be more important than realistic threat to national resources. Research on the principle-implementation gap, in comparison, has not tested mediating psychological processes in the same manner, although it has identified some correlates of White Americans’ attitudes toward concrete implementation policies (e.g., Bobo, 1988; Dixon et al., 2010; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Schuman et al., 1997; Tuch & Hughes, 1996).

Construing Multiculturalism in a Concrete Manner Is Likely to Evoke National Identity Threat

In order to better understand why abstract versus concrete construals of multiculturalism may differentially impact ethnic minority attitudes and behavioral intentions, we turn to social identity and self-categorization theories (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), which have played a prominent role in psychological research on intergroup relations. A core precept of these theories is that people are motivated to perceive their ingroup as positively distinctive from other groups in order to maintain a clear distinction between “us” and “them” (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Reid & Hogg, 2005). One way of doing this is by creating and upholding an ideal prototype of the ingroup characterized by its most typical attributes (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Waldzus, Mummendey, Wenzel, & Weber, 2003).

Building on social identity theory, research on the ingroup projection model has shown that people tend to perceive their ingroup within a larger superordinate category as more prototypical of the larger category than any other subgroup to which they do not belong (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Waldzus et al., 2003; Wenzel, Mummendey, & Waldzus, 2007). For example, one study found that German participants perceived attributes associated with Germans as being more prototypical of the superordinate category “European” than were attributes associated with any other European country (Wenzel, Mummendey, Weber, & Waldzus, 2003). Another study found that both business students and psychology students perceived their own major as being more prototypical of the superordinate category “students” in general than were other majors (Wenzel et al., 2003).

Consistent with the above findings, national identity research has found White Americans view American nationality in terms of the prototypical attributes of their own racial group and view racial and ethnic minority groups as peripheral to the definition of who is American (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Devos & Banaji, 2005; Devos, Gavin, & Quintana, 2010; Devos & Ma, 2008; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2010; Yogeeswaran et al., 2011, 2012). This tendency, we predict, will also lead White Americans to view ethnic minorities’ cultural traditions, values, and practices as threatening to the American national prototype, which is defined in terms of European American values and traditions (Yogeeswaran et al., 2012; cf. Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999). Perceived threat, in turn, is expected to increase prejudice toward and social distancing from ethnic minority groups as a way of reclaiming positive social identity (cf. Branscombe et al., 1999; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1998). Because *social identity threat* in the present research is in the context of one’s nation, we refer to it as *national identity threat*. One might consider this type of threat to be a form of symbolic threat: that is, threat to one’s national culture, values, and worldview (Esses, Haddock, & Zanna, 1993; Sears, 1988; Stephan, Ybarra, & Bachman, 1999; Stephan, Ybarra, & Morrison, 2009; for a review, see Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2006).

We predict that encountering a concrete construal of multiculturalism that asks White perceivers to consider specific steps necessary to achieve the goals of multiculturalism will activate the concern that prototypical American values, culture, and worldview

are being threatened by the imposition of ethnic minority values and culture. Such threat will, in turn, lead to more prejudice toward and social distancing from ethnic minorities. In support of this prediction prior research has shown that multiculturalism is experienced as a threat to the national group from the perspective of majority group members (Ginges & Cairns, 2000; Kauff, Asbrock, Thörner, & Wagner, 2013; Verkuyten, 2006, 2009; Yogeeswaran et al., 2012).

By contrast, changing the construal of multiculturalism to focus on its broad goals (i.e., promote inclusive American values) is less likely to evoke threat, because this construal is removed from imminent changes to mainstream American culture and makes salient inclusive American values (Schildkraut, 2007; also see Luguri et al., 2012), thereby reducing prejudice and social distancing. Because multiculturalism promotes the recognition and celebration of cultural values and practices but does not necessarily demand a shift in resources, symbolic threat to national identity (not resource threat) is likely to mediate attitudes and behavioral intentions. This prediction is consistent with some previous work (e.g., Morrison et al., 2010; but also see Verkuyten, 2009).

Political Orientation Moderates Impact of Multiculturalism Construals on Attitudes and Behavioral Intentions

Do ideological differences in political orientation moderate the effects of multiculturalism construals on outgroup prejudice and social distancing? Previous research in political psychology has shown that political conservatives tend to express greater opposition toward policies related to diversity, affirmative action, and immigration than do liberals (e.g., Citrin et al., 2001; Federico & Sidanius, 2002; Reyna, Henry, Korfmacher, & Tucker, 2006; Rydgren, 2007; Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1996; Sniderman & Carmines, 1997; Sniderman, Crosby & Howell, 2000). For example, political conservatives tend to oppose multicultural policies such as bilingual education and show greater support for “English only” policies in public schools (e.g., Citrin et al., 2001). Similarly, political conservatism predicts greater opposition toward affirmative action policies (e.g., Federico & Sidanius, 2002; Reyna et al., 2006; Sniderman & Carmines, 1997). In contrast, political liberalism is more consistent with multiculturalism. Political liberals, for example, are more likely to support inclusive immigration policies and immigrant rights (Citrin et al., 2001).

Taken together, these findings suggest that liberals are likely to be accepting of multiculturalism, regardless of how it is construed (in an abstract or concrete manner), because the concept fits with their ideological orientation. However, conservatives are likely to be more sensitive to varying construals of multiculturalism. A concrete construal may be particularly threatening to conservatives because it emphasizes how multiculturalism can be implemented, thereby highlighting imminent changes to the national status quo. Changes to the status quo are perceived as particularly threatening to conservatives, as shown by a decade of research in political psychology; conservatives manage threat and uncertainty by gravitating toward the tradition and stability provided by the status quo (e.g., Jost, 2006; Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003; Thórisdóttir & Jost, 2011). Compared to a concrete construal, an abstract construal of multiculturalism may be less threatening because it emphasizes social inclusion as a broad goal without

proposing concrete ways to bring out social change. Indirect support for this prediction comes from two sources. First, recent research shows that priming an abstract relative to a concrete mindset increases concerns about fairness, especially among political conservatives (Luguri et al., 2012). Second, other research shows that right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), which is associated with conservatism (Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Jost et al., 2003), predicts negative reactions toward multiculturalism (Kauff et al., 2013).

Overview of the Present Research

We synthesized the above-mentioned research literatures to investigate three research questions. First, will an abstract construal of multiculturalism decrease White Americans' prejudice toward ethnic minorities relative to a baseline control condition, and will a concrete construal of multiculturalism increase prejudice toward ethnic minorities relative to the same baseline? Experiments 1–2 examined this question. Second, do perceived threats to national identity represent a psychological process responsible for the differential effects of abstract versus concrete construals on attitudes and behavioral intentions? Experiments 2 and 3 investigated this question by examining the mediating role of symbolic threat to national identity and realistic threat to national resources on attitudes and behavioral intentions toward ethnic minorities. Finally, does perceivers' political orientation moderate the impact of varying construals of multiculturalism on ethnic attitudes and behavioral intentions? Experiment 3 examined this question.

Experiment 1

White American participants read about multiculturalism described in an abstract manner (its main goals were highlighted) or a concrete manner (the specific steps necessary to achieve those goals were highlighted), after which their attitudes toward an ethnic minority group (Hispanic Americans) were assessed. We specifically chose this target group because they represent the largest and fastest growing ethnic minority group in the U.S. and are, therefore, considered by some to have a significant influence on the nation's values and resources (e.g., Dovidio, Gluszek, John, Dittmann, & Lagunes, 2010).

Method

Participants. One hundred and twenty-six White Americans (58 male and 68 female) participated in this experiment for extra course credit. All participants were undergraduate students between the ages 18 and 26 years ($M = 20.05$; $SD = 1.33$) from a large public university in the northeast of the U.S.

Manipulating construals of multiculturalism. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions in which they read about multiculturalism construed in an abstract manner, read about multiculturalism, construed in either an abstract manner or a concrete manner, or else read about something neutral and unrelated to multiculturalism (control condition). In the control condition, participants read a short essay on a subject that was about national interests but completely unrelated to intergroup relations (i.e., an essay about nature reserves that are part of the American

heritage). Participants in the abstract and concrete construal of multiculturalism conditions read an essay focused on various aspects of the ideology. Based on research showing that the focus on why a goal is important versus how that goal can be achieved is critical to the distinction between abstract versus concrete construals respectively (see Freitas et al., 2004; Luguri et al., 2012; McCrea et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2008), the abstract construal of multiculturalism focused on *why* multiculturalism is important, while the concrete construal focused on *how* multiculturalism can be achieved. The essay chosen to represent the abstract construal of multiculturalism prime was originally developed by Wolsko et al. (2000) and subsequently used in many psychological studies on multiculturalism (e.g., Correll et al., 2008; Morrison et al., 2010; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004; Vorauer et al., 2009). This essay articulates the broad goals of multiculturalism and why these goals are important. This essay was entitled "Why Is Multiculturalism Beneficial?" and included excerpts such as the following:

Each ethnic group within the United States can contribute in its own unique way. Recognizing this diversity would help to build a sense of harmony and complementarity among the various ethnic groups. . . . This could potentially be a great asset because different cultural groups bring different perspectives to life, providing a richness in styles of interaction, problem solving strategies, food, dress, music, and art. . . . Each group has its own talents, as well as its own problems, and by acknowledging both these strengths and weaknesses, we validate the identity of each group and we recognize its existence and its importance to the social fabric.

The concrete construal of multiculturalism condition included all the text in the above condition followed by a list of concrete ways in which multiculturalism can be achieved. This second part of the essay was entitled "How Can We Achieve Multiculturalism?" and included excerpts such as the following:

Multiculturalism can be achieved if we collectively support the ability of ethnic minorities to speak languages other than English in the workplace, school, and other public arenas. . . . Multiculturalism can be achieved if the academic curriculum in schools and colleges include classes related to diversity of ethnic minority cultures (African, Latin, Asian, and Native American). . . . Multiculturalism can be achieved if we accept and promote ethnic minorities' celebration of culture-specific festivals and holidays such as Cinco de Mayo, Fiesta DC, and Semana Santa.

After reading the essay, participants in the abstract construal condition were asked to generate five reasons why adopting multiculturalism would benefit American society (similar to Correll et al., 2008; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004; Wolsko et al., 2000), while participants in the concrete construal condition were asked to list five ways how multiculturalism could be achieved. Next, participants were either given a list of reasons why multiculturalism would benefit society (abstract condition) or a list about how multiculturalism can be achieved (concrete condition) allegedly written by previous participants in the study. Participants were asked to circle statements that were the same as statements on their own list. This task was similar to one used in previous research (e.g., Correll et al., 2008; Morrison et al., 2010; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004; Vorauer et al., 2009) as a way to focus participants on the main elements of the manipulation.

Prior to conducting this study, we had conducted a pilot study to ensure that these construals of multiculturalism were in fact per-

ceived as abstract versus concrete. To that end, 30 White American undergraduates (8 male, 22 female) participated in the pilot study and were randomly assigned to read either the abstract or the concrete multiculturalism essay. All participants then rated the extent to which the essay was “abstract” and “general” ($\alpha = .72$) or “concrete” and “specific” ($\alpha = .82$) on a scale of 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). Finally, participants evaluated how positive and negative the essay appeared in order to ensure that the two essays were similarly valenced. As expected, one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) revealed that participants in the abstract construal condition perceived their essay as significantly more abstract ($M = 4.57$; $SD = 1.03$) than did participants in the concrete construal condition ($M = 3.40$; $SD = 1.10$), $F(1, 29) = 8.92$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .24$. In mirror image fashion, participants in the concrete construal condition rated their multiculturalism prime as significantly more concrete ($M = 4.40$; $SD = 0.99$) than did participants in the abstract construal condition ($M = 3.00$; $SD = 1.21$), $F(1, 29) = 12.07$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .30$. There were no significant differences in the perceived valence of the abstract and concrete essays about multiculturalism (all $ps > .50$). This pilot established that our essays were in fact perceived as being sufficiently abstract versus concrete in their framing, as intended.

Attitudes toward Hispanic Americans. This was assessed with a scale developed by Plant, Butz, and Tartakovsky (2008) that included 27 statements to which participants indicated their agreement or disagreement on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*). Sample items include “I would not want to live in a predominantly Hispanic American neighborhood,” “I would probably feel somewhat self-conscious dancing with a Hispanic American in a public place,” and “Generally, Hispanic Americans are not as smart as Whites.” This scale was scored such that higher scores indicate greater prejudice toward Hispanic Americans.

Procedure. Participants were recruited under the guise of a study on “reading comprehension and social judgments.” They first completed a demographic survey with questions about their gender, age, race/ethnicity, and citizenship. They were then randomly assigned to one of three conditions where they received a short essay that described multiculturalism in an abstract manner (focusing on why its goals were important), that described multiculturalism in a concrete manner (focusing on how its goals can be achieved), or that described an American nature reserve (control condition). After this participants completed the thought-listing task about the essay described earlier. Then, under the guise of a second unrelated study, participants completed the scale assessing their attitudes toward Hispanic Americans. Finally, participants were probed for suspicion, debriefed, and thanked for their participation.

Results and Discussion

Attitudes toward Hispanic Americans. A composite of participants’ attitudes toward Hispanic Americans was created by averaging all 27 items ($\alpha = .96$) of the above-mentioned scale (Plant et al., 2008). A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of multiculturalism construal, $F(2, 123) = 14.43$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .19$ (see Figure 1). Participants primed with an abstract construal showed significantly less prejudice toward Hispanic Americans ($M = 2.38$; $SD = 1.04$) than did those in the control

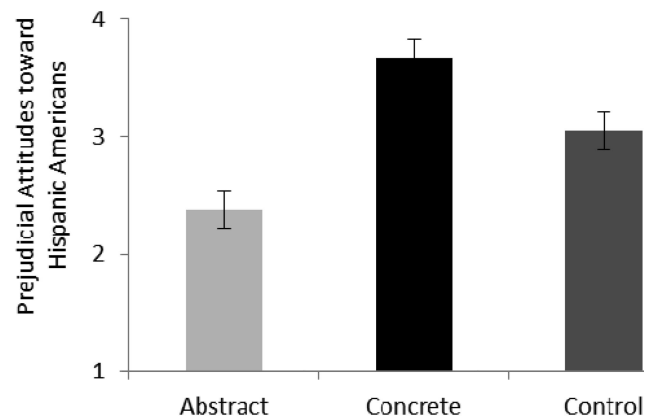


Figure 1. Mean differences in prejudicial attitudes toward Hispanic Americans. Error bars depict standard error.

condition ($M = 3.05$; $SD = 1.17$), $t(123) = -2.81$, $p < .01$, while participants primed with a concrete construal of multiculturalism showed significantly more prejudice toward Hispanic Americans ($M = 3.68$; $SD = 1.10$) than did those in the control condition ($M = 3.05$; $SD = 1.17$), $t(123) = 2.61$, $p = .01$. Not surprisingly, expressions of anti-Hispanic prejudice were greater after reading about the concrete multiculturalism essay ($M = 3.68$; $SD = 1.10$) than about an abstract multiculturalism essay ($M = 2.38$; $SD = 1.04$), $t(123) = -5.37$, $p < .01$.

In sum, Experiment 1 provides initial evidence that framing multiculturalism abstractly by highlighting its broad goals has the effect of reducing majority group members’ prejudice toward an ethnic minority relative to a control condition. However, framing the same ideology concretely by highlighting specific ways in which it can be achieved has the effect of increasing prejudice toward the same ethnic minority group relative to a control condition. These findings complement and extend research on the principle-implementation gap by demonstrating that systematically changing the construal of the same ideology (multiculturalism) to focus on its abstract principles or concrete implementation strategies influences the valence of people’s attitudes toward an ethnic minority group presumed to benefit from multiculturalism.

Experiment 2

Experiment 2 built on the previous results by identifying and testing one important psychological process predicted to exacerbate prejudice when a concrete framing of multiculturalism is encountered but to attenuate prejudice when an abstract framing of multiculturalism is encountered. We predicted that national identity threat is an important underlying process and driver of these attitudes (Ginges & Cairns, 2000; Morrison et al., 2010; Verkuyten, 2009; Yogeeswaran et al., 2012). When White Americans read about specific diversity policies aimed at achieving multicultural goals, it highlights how the American mainstream, which is prototypically European American at present, will change if diverse cultural practices enter the mainstream—making many White perceivers feel threatened that mainstream American values, practices, and worldview are in danger of being eroded. Increased threat, in turn, is predicted to increase prejudice against racial and

ethnic minority groups. However, national identity threat is less likely to be evoked when White Americans read about abstract goals of multiculturalism in broad brushstrokes. Because an abstract construal stays away from specific policies that challenge the national prototype and articulates only why multiculturalism enriches American society, it is likely to make salient general values of social inclusion, reduce White Americans' perceptions of diverse cultural practices as threatening, and in turn reduce prejudice.

Method

Participants. One hundred and twenty-seven White Americans (40 male and 87 female) participated in this experiment for extra course credit. All participants were undergraduate students between the ages 18 and 34 years ($M = 19.93$; $SD = 2.63$) from a large public university in the northeast part of the U.S.

Measures and manipulations. The measures and manipulations were identical to those used in Experiment 1, with one additional measure designed to assess the proposed mediator—perceived threat to national identity (see below).

Threat to national identity. Participants completed six items assessing the degree to which they felt that the United States was threatened by diverse ethnic groups' values and practices; these items were adapted from previous research (Schatz, Staub, & Lavine, 1999; Warner, Hornsey, & Jetten, 2007; Yogeeswaran et al., 2012). Participants were asked to indicate their response on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*). Items included the following: "Widespread adoption of cultural practices from diverse ethnic groups troubles me because they might weaken American culture," "It is important that Americans preserve the cultural traditions passed down from our European forefathers in order to avoid blurring the boundaries between what is American and what is foreign," "People who live in the U.S. and follow their own cultural customs have a detrimental effect on American culture," "Bilingual education will weaken national unity in America," "Customs and practices that are different from that of mainstream society have a negative effect on America's uniqueness in the world," and "Americans must strive to maintain their customs and practices in order to avoid the watering down of American culture."

Procedure. Participants were recruited under the guise of a study on "reading comprehension and social judgments." They were first randomly assigned to one of three conditions in which they read either an essay on multiculturalism framed abstractly versus concretely or an essay on American nature reserves (control condition) before completing the thought listing task used in Experiment 1. Then, under the guise of a separate and unrelated task, participants completed measures assessing perceived threat to national identity followed by their attitudes toward Hispanic Americans.

Results and Discussion

Mean differences by construal condition.

Attitudes toward Hispanic Americans. An attitude composite was created by averaging all 27 items ($\alpha = .96$) of the Attitudes Toward Hispanics Scale. Replicating the findings of Experiment 1, a one-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of multi-

culturalism construal, $F(2, 124) = 9.41, p < .001, \eta^2 = .13$ (see Figure 2, Panel A). Participants primed with an abstract construal showed significantly less prejudice toward Hispanic Americans ($M = 2.34$; $SD = 1.00$) than did others in the control condition ($M = 2.86$; $SD = 1.08$), $t(124) = -2.17, p = .03$. In contrast, participants primed with a concrete construal of multiculturalism ($M = 3.37$; $SD = 1.26$) showed greater prejudice than did others in the control condition ($M = 2.86$; $SD = 1.08$), $t(124) = 2.04, p = .04$. The concrete construal also elicited more prejudice toward Hispanic Americans than did the abstract construal of multiculturalism, $t(124) = -4.33, p < .01$.

Threat to national identity. A composite score for national identity threat was created by averaging all six items on the measure ($\alpha = .73$). A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of multiculturalism construal, $F(2, 124) = 11.92, p < .001, \eta^2 = .16$ (see Figure 2, Panel B). Participants primed with an abstract construal of multiculturalism perceived diverse cultural practices as significantly less threatening to national identity ($M = 2.64$; $SD = 0.94$) than did others in the control condition ($M = 3.12$; $SD = 1.06$), $t(124) = -2.23, p = .03$. In contrast, participants primed with a concrete construal perceived diverse cultural practices as significantly more threatening to national identity ($M = 3.67$; $SD = 0.95$) than did others in the control condition ($M = 3.12$; $SD = 1.07$), $t(124) = 2.51, p = .01$. Perceived threat

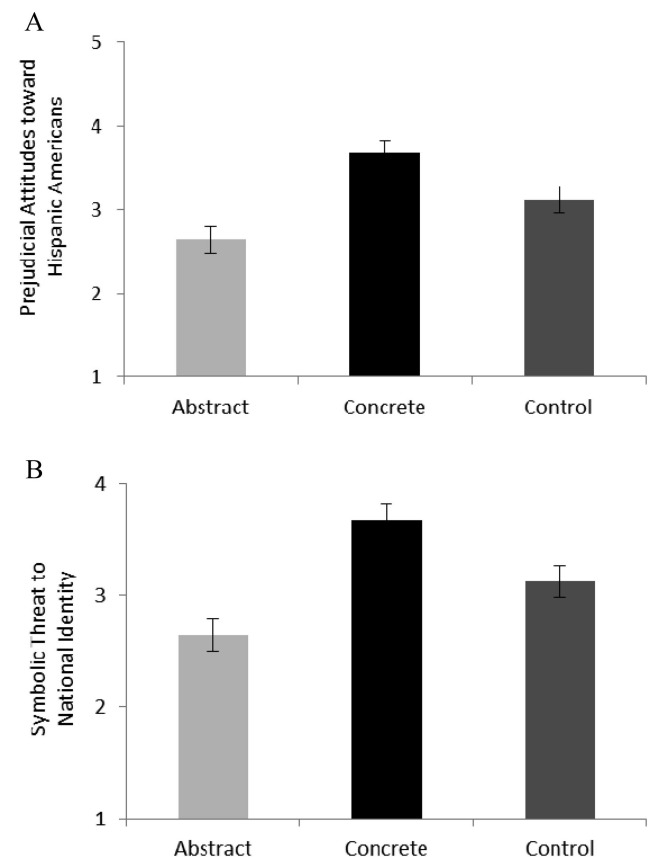


Figure 2. A: Mean differences in prejudicial attitudes toward Hispanic Americans. B: Mean differences in threat to national identity. Error bars depict standard error.

was also significantly greater after reading about a concrete construal of multiculturalism than an abstract construal, $t(124) = -4.88, p < .01$.

Mediation analyses. Mediation analyses tested whether there was a significant indirect effect of multiculturalism construals on prejudicial attitudes because of national identity threat. Following the procedures outlined by Hayes (2013), we computed the indirect effect using bias-corrected bootstrapping with 10,000 resamples. Note that if the confidence interval (CI) in these analyses does not include zero, the effect is considered statistically significant. These analyses revealed that perceived threats to national identity significantly mediated the effect of an abstract construal of multiculturalism (relative to control) on prejudice toward Hispanic Americans, indirect coefficient = $-0.26, SE = 0.13, 95\% CI [-0.56, -0.03]$. Similarly, perceived threats to national identity significantly mediated the effect of a concrete construal of multiculturalism (relative to control) on prejudice toward Hispanic Americans, indirect coefficient = $0.31, SE = 0.12, 95\% CI [0.07, 0.56]$ (see conceptual Figure 3).

In sum, Experiment 2 revealed that an abstract construal of multiculturalism decreases ethnic prejudice by minimizing the extent to which diverse cultural practices are seen as threatening American national identity, whereas a concrete construal increases prejudice by amplifying the extent to which diverse cultural practices are seen as threatening American national identity. These findings demonstrate that national identity threat, a form of symbolic threat, serves as an underlying process that drives the differential effects of abstract and concrete multiculturalism on prejudice.

Experiment 3

Given that concrete construals of multiculturalism highlight imminent changes to the status quo, would perceivers' political orientation moderate the impact of multiculturalism construals on prejudice and social distancing? Previous research has shown that political conservatives tend to be more resistant to social change than political liberals and gravitate toward the stability afforded by the status quo (Jost, 2006; Jost et al., 2003; Thorisdottir & Jost, 2011). Additionally, conservatives tend to express stronger opposition toward diversity policies such as affirmative action, bilingual education, and immigrant rights than do liberals, who show stronger support for such policies (e.g., Citrin et al., 2001; Federico & Sidanius, 2002; Reyna et al., 2006; Sniderman et al., 2000).

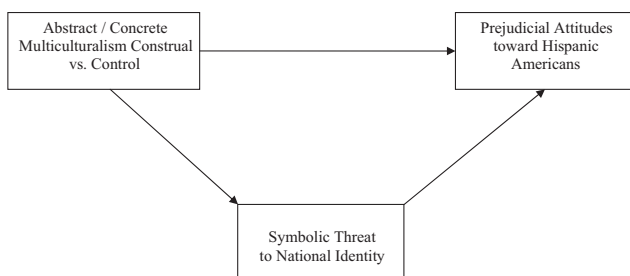


Figure 3. Conceptual diagram of the indirect effect of abstract and concrete construals of multiculturalism on prejudicial attitudes toward Hispanic Americans through perceived threat to national identity.

Therefore, political conservatives may be especially threatened by a concrete construal of multiculturalism that highlights imminent changes to the status quo and conflicts with their ideological orientation. For liberals, who tend to show greater support for diversity policies and are less threatened by social change, varying the construal of multiculturalism to be abstract or concrete is unlikely to make a difference (also see Luguri et al., 2012). Thus, our first goal in Experiment 3 was to examine whether individual differences in political orientation moderate the effects of multiculturalism construals on ethnic attitudes.

A second goal in Experiment 3 was to systematically test the type of threat driving the differential effects of multiculturalism construals on ethnic attitudes. As discussed in the introduction, we predicted that multiculturalism would affect the extent to which Whites perceive diverse ethnic groups' values and practices as a symbolic threat to American national identity, but it may have less of an effect (or no effect) on resource threat, which involves competition for scarce resources and threat to the ingroup's political and economic power (e.g., Bobo, 1988; LeVine & Campbell, 1972; Riek et al., 2006; Sherif & Sherif, 1969; Stephan et al., 1999, 2009). To test this hypothesis, Experiment 3 measured both symbolic threat to national identity and realistic threat to national resources as potential mediators of prejudice.

A third important goal in Experiment 3 was to modify the manipulation of abstract and concrete construals of multiculturalism in order to rule out a confound that provides an alternative explanation for the results of Experiments 1 and 2. The two prior experiments manipulated multiculturalism construals by providing perceivers with an essay about multiculturalism framed either in an abstract manner by focusing on why multiculturalism is important (similar to previous work; e.g., Vorauer et al., 2009; Wolsko et al., 2000) or a concrete manner by also focusing on specific ways in which multiculturalism can be achieved. However, one might argue that by doing so, the type of construal manipulated was accompanied by slight variations in the content of the essays, and the latter might be responsible for the findings obtained in Experiments 1 and 2 more than the manipulated construal. Put differently, would the same results be obtained if perceivers were given the exact same information about multiculturalism and instructed to construe it abstractly or concretely by themselves? Such a manipulation would rule out the alternative explanation that small variations in essay content, not perceivers' construal of multiculturalism, produced the results. Thus, the third goal in Experiment 3 was to address this issue by modifying the construal manipulation and instructing participants to reflect on and write about why multiculturalism is important versus how multiculturalism can be achieved without providing this information to them. This manipulation is, therefore, very similar to previous research in the construal literature (e.g., Freitas et al., 2004; Luguri et al., 2012; McCrea et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2008).

A fourth goal in Experiment 3 was to extend beyond attitudes as the dependent measure to also explore people's behavioral intentions—specifically, their desire to have contact with (or avoid) ethnic minorities. As established by previous research, intergroup contact has positive effects on a variety of important intergroup outcomes that can foster intergroup harmony and reduce conflict (Chiro & Seligman, 2001; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Therefore, examining whether varied construals of multiculturalism influence White Americans' desire to seek contact rather than avoid contact

with racial and ethnic outgroups is likely to be important. To that end Experiment 3 measured White Americans' desire for contact with Hispanic Americans and avoidance of contact in terms of both casual, acquaintance-like contact and close, intimate contact.

A final goal in Experiment 3 was to test the generalizability of prior findings in a broad, more varied, community sample rather than a student sample, given that students, on average, tend to have more positive views of multiculturalism than does the general population. To fulfill this goal, we used Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) system to recruit participants. Many recent studies in social psychology have used MTurk for data collection (e.g., Chambers, Schlenker, & Collisson, 2013; Kaiser et al., 2013; Shapiro, Baldwin, Williams, & Trawalter, 2011) and found reliable results (see Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011).

With all these goals in mind, in Experiment 3, we measured participants' political orientation first, before randomly assigning them to think about multiculturalism given abstract or concrete construal instructions. We then measured the impact of these multiculturalism construals on perceived threats to national identity and national resources before assessing attitudes toward Hispanic Americans and the desire for both casual and intimate contact with Hispanic Americans.

Method

Participants. A total of 98 White American adults living in the United States completed the entire study through Amazon's Mechanical Turk system in exchange for 1 U.S. dollar (see Buhrmester et al., 2011, for a full description of MTurk sampling). These participants ranged from 18 to 64 years of age ($M = 31.78$; $SD = 10.64$). All participants in the sample were U.S. citizens or residents of White/European heritage with English identified as their primary language. The gender composition was almost evenly split, with 48 identified as male and 49 as female.

Measures and manipulations.

Manipulation. Because one of the primary goals of Experiment 3 was to examine the impact of abstractly versus concretely construing multiculturalism without any specific prompts, we utilized a procedure closely aligned with previous work on abstract versus concrete mindsets (e.g., Freitas et al., 2004; Luguri et al., 2012; McCrea et al., 2012). Participants in both conditions were first provided with a brief description of multiculturalism in America (i.e., "*With an increasingly diverse population in countries such as the United States, figuring out how to manage intergroup relations among diverse racial and ethnic groups has become an important topic of national interest. Multiculturalism is one way of managing growing diversity in such countries by calling for the recognition and celebration of cultural differences*"). After they read this description, participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. Those assigned to the abstract construal condition were first asked to write a few lines on the broad goals of multiculturalism and why one might engage in it, irrespective of whether they as individuals supported those goals or not.

Then, as an introduction to the abstract construal task they were about to do, participants were given an example to illustrate how this task should be completed. In this example, participants read about a mundane activity (e.g., students participating in a research study) and were told that one could ask a series of questions as to why people would participate in this activity. They were told one

answer to this question might be to satisfy a course requirement, whereupon one might again ask: Why are they satisfying the course requirement? The answer in response might be to pass a psychology course. Another "why?" question could follow: Why pass the course? The answer might be because they want to earn a college degree. Why earn a college degree? The answer might be because they want to find a good job. Why find a good job? The answer might be because they feel that doing so can bring them happiness in life. Participants read this entire sequence of "why?" questions and subsequent answers as an example to illustrate the abstract construal task. This was taken from Freitas and colleagues' studies on abstract versus concrete mindsets (see Freitas et al., 2004 for details).

After reading this example, participants returned to multiculturalism and were asked to generate four reasons why multiculturalism is pursued in American society and rate each one on how much it would help society meet important goals. For each reason participants generated, they were asked a series of "Why?" questions that guided their thinking in an increasingly abstract direction similar to the example they had read a few minutes earlier. In other words, once participants wrote the first reason why multiculturalism is important, they were asked, Why is this reason important? The answer elicited another "why?" question. This technique of eliciting an abstract construal of a target goal (the goal of achieving multiculturalism in American society) was taken from prior construal research (Freitas et al., 2004; Luguri et al., 2012; McCrea et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2008).

In the concrete construal condition, participants were first asked to write a few lines on how multiculturalism can be practiced in contemporary America and provide concrete strategies that would achieve the goal of multiculturalism irrespective of whether or not they supported the strategies. They were told that these strategies could include existing strategies or new ones they generated. Then, as before, as an introduction to the concrete construal task they were about to do, participants were given an example to illustrate how this task should be completed. In this example, participants read a passage on how people might achieve a big goal of finding happiness in life. How might they do this? Perhaps finding a good job or being educated can help. How might they do these things? Perhaps by earning a degree. How do they earn a degree? By satisfying course requirements. How do they satisfy course requirements? By reading and learning the course material or participating in a psychology experiment (Freitas et al., 2004).

After reading this example passage, participants returned to multiculturalism and were asked to list four specific strategies by which multiculturalism can be pursued and rate the extent to which each strategy would help achieve multiculturalism. For each strategy participants generated, they were asked a series of "How?" questions that guided their thinking in an increasingly concrete direction similar to the example they had read a few minutes earlier. In other words, once participants wrote down a specific step that could be taken to implement multiculturalism, they were asked, how can this particular step be implemented? The answer elicited another "how?" question. This technique of eliciting progressively concrete construals of a target goal (the goal of achieving multiculturalism in American society) was adapted from prior construal research (Freitas et al., 2004; Luguri et al., 2012; McCrea et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2008).

Attitudes toward Hispanic Americans. Participants completed the same measure utilized in Experiments 1 and 2 to assess their attitudes toward Hispanic Americans.

Behavioral intentions.

Willingness to engage in close intergroup contact. Participants rated the extent to which they were interested in forming close personal relationships with Hispanic American individuals using five self-report items adapted from previous research (Esses & Dovidio, 2002; Tropp & Bianchi, 2006). On a scale of 1 (*not at all willing*) to 7 (*extremely willing*), participants indicated the extent to which they would be willing or unwilling to “Marry a Hispanic American person,” “Have an intimate relationship with a Hispanic American person,” “accept a Hispanic American person as a family member through marriage,” “have a Hispanic American person as a close friend,” and “confide in a Hispanic American person.” These items formed an index where higher numbers indicated a greater interest in close intergroup contact.

Willingness to engage in casual intergroup contact. Participants also rated the extent to which they were interested in forming casual relationships with Hispanic American individuals using seven self-report items (Esses & Dovidio, 2002; Tropp & Bianchi, 2006). They were asked to indicate the extent to which they would be willing or unwilling to “Accept a Hispanic American person as a neighbor,” “Accept a Hispanic American person as a co-worker,” “Accept a Hispanic American person as a casual acquaintance,” “Visit a Hispanic American person in his or her home,” “Have a Hispanic American person visit your home,” “Have a Hispanic American person as a casual acquaintance,” and “Attend a cultural event sponsored by a Hispanic American organization.” Responses were given on the same 7-point scale indicated earlier. These items formed an index where higher numbers indicated a greater interest in casual intergroup contact.

Political orientation. As an assessment of perceivers’ political orientation, participants completed three items taken from previous work (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). Participants were asked to indicate their political views on (a) foreign policy issues, (b) economic issues, and (c) social issues, by marking a position on three 7-point scales anchored by 1 (*very liberal*), 2 (*liberal*), 3 (*slightly liberal*), 4 (*middle of the road*), 5 (*slightly conservative*), 6 (*conservative*), and 7 (*very conservative*). These items showed high internal consistency (3 items; $\alpha = .90$; $M = 2.98$; $SD = 1.29$).

Perceived threat.

Symbolic threat to national identity. In addition to the six items utilized in Experiment 2, three items adapted from Stephan et al. (1999) were included to create a more reliable index of national identity threat. These additional items assessed the extent to which participants felt diverse values and practices were negatively affecting “American culture,” “American values,” and the “American way of life.”

Realistic threat to national resources. Participants reported the extent to which they perceived diverse ethnic groups as consuming American resources and public services by rating the extent to which they thought diverse ethnic groups were increasing versus decreasing “job losses in the U.S.,” “the availability of social services in the U.S.,” and “the level of crime in the U.S.” These items were adapted from Stephan et al. (1999).

Procedure. Participants were recruited from MTurk under the guise of a research study that involved a variety of unrelated tasks

including a thought exercise and a survey on contemporary issues in America. After they provided consent, participants received a brief demographic questionnaire assessing age, race, sex, citizenship, primary language, and political orientation. Participants were told that they would complete a short thought-listing exercise in which they would be provided with the brief description of multiculturalism and then asked to generate reasons why multiculturalism is an important goal or specific ways how multiculturalism as a goal can be achieved. Then participants were given an example of how this thought-listing task was to be done, after which they generated reasons why multiculturalism was important or how it could be achieved. All participants then completed a measure assessing symbolic threat to national identity and realistic threat to national resources (in counterbalanced order) before completing measures assessing their attitudes toward Hispanic Americans and intentions to engage in close or casual contact with Hispanic Americans. The order of the dependent measures was also counterbalanced between subjects.

Results and Discussion

Mean differences.

Attitudes toward Hispanic Americans. Once again, items from this measure showed high internal consistency (27 items; $\alpha = .97$). A one-way ANOVA revealed that participants randomly assigned to construe multiculturalism concretely expressed significantly more prejudice toward Hispanic Americans ($M = 3.07$; $SD = 1.46$) than did others randomly assigned to construe multiculturalism abstractly ($M = 2.29$; $SD = 1.13$), $F(1, 95) = 8.73$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2 = .08$.

Willingness to engage in casual vs. close intergroup contact.

We created two separate indices to capture participants’ willingness to engage in casual contact (7 items; $\alpha = .96$) and close contact (5 items; $\alpha = .90$) with Hispanics. These indices were treated as a repeated measure in the following ANOVA. A Multiculturalism Construal (abstract vs. concrete) \times Type of Contact (casual vs. close) mixed model ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of multiculturalism construal on participants’ overall willingness to engage in intergroup contact, $F(1, 95) = 6.59$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .07$. Participants who construed multiculturalism concretely were significantly less willing to engage in intergroup contact ($M = 5.78$; $SD = 1.11$) than those who construed multiculturalism more abstractly ($M = 6.30$; $SD = 0.83$). The Multiculturalism Construal \times Type of Contact interaction was not statistically significant, $F(1, 95) = 1.61$, $p = .21$, $\eta^2 = .017$, indicating that varying the construal of multiculturalism had the same effect on participants’ desire for intergroup contact regardless of whether it involved casual or close contact. The items from these two indexes were therefore combined for subsequent analyses and showed high reliability ($\alpha = .95$).

Symbolic threat to national identity. An index of symbolic national identity threat was created by averaging all nine items of the measure ($\alpha = .91$). A one-way ANOVA revealed that participants who construed multiculturalism concretely felt that American national identity was being more threatened by diverse cultural practices ($M = 3.25$; $SD = 1.16$) than did others who construed the ideology more abstractly ($M = 2.76$; $SD = 1.01$), $F(1, 95) = 4.94$, $p = .03$, $\eta^2 = .05$.

Realistic threat to national resources. An index of realistic threat to resources was created by averaging the three items of the measure ($\alpha = .69$). A one-way ANOVA revealed that an abstract construal of multiculturalism ($M = 4.20$; $SD = 0.91$) was no different from a concrete construal ($M = 4.33$; $SD = 0.86$) in its impact on perceived threat to national resource ($F < 1$, $p = .47$, $\eta^2 = .005$).¹ Given that multiculturalism construals had no differential effect on realistic threats to national resources, we could not test for its potentially mediating role in the subsequent analyses.

Mediation analyses.

Attitudes toward Hispanic Americans. Mediation analyses tested whether there was a significant indirect effect of multiculturalism construals on prejudicial attitudes because of symbolic threat to national identity. Following the procedures outlined by Hayes (2013), we computed the indirect effect using bias-corrected bootstrapping with 10,000 resamples. Mediation analyses revealed that symbolic threats to national identity significantly mediated the effect of abstract versus concrete construals of multiculturalism on prejudicial attitudes toward Hispanic Americans, indirect coefficient = 0.43, $SE = 0.20$, 95% CI [0.06, 0.86].

Willingness to engage in intergroup contact. Using the procedure outlined above, mediational analyses revealed that symbolic threat to national identity significantly mediated the effect of abstract versus concrete construals of multiculturalism on perceivers' willingness to engage in intergroup contact, indirect coefficient = -0.20 , $SE = 0.10$, 95% CI [-0.43 , -0.03].²

Reactions of conservatives vs. liberals to varying construals of multiculturalism.

Attitudes toward Hispanic Americans. We then examined whether individual differences in perceivers' political orientation (3 items; $\alpha = .90$) would moderate the effect of multiculturalism construals on attitudes toward Hispanic Americans. Regression analyses revealed a significant interaction of multiculturalism construals and political orientation on attitudes toward Hispanic Americans, $b = 0.52$, $SE = 0.18$, 95% CI [0.17, 0.86] (see Figure 4, Panel A). To decompose this interaction effect, we tested whether the effects of multiculturalism construals were significant at ± 1 SD above and below the mean of political orientation (i.e., liberals vs. conservatives). Results revealed that for liberals (those 1 SD below the mean on political orientation), the effect of abstract versus concrete construals of multiculturalism on prejudicial attitudes was not significant, $b = -0.02$, $SE = 0.32$, 95% CI [-0.65 , 0.61]. However, for political conservatives (participants 1 SD above the mean on political ideology), the effect of abstract versus concrete construals of multiculturalism on prejudicial attitudes was statistically significant, $b = 1.32$, $SE = 0.32$, 95% CI [0.69, 1.95]. In other words, for political conservatives, construing multiculturalism concretely (rather than abstractly) significantly increased prejudice toward Hispanic Americans. However, for liberals, abstract versus concrete construals of multiculturalism did not have any differential effects on attitudes toward Hispanics.

Willingness to engage in intergroup contact. We also tested whether individual differences in perceivers' political orientation would moderate the effect of multiculturalism construals on perceivers' willingness to engage in intergroup contact. Regression analyses revealed a significant interaction of multiculturalism construals and political orientation on willingness to engage in intergroup contact, $b = -0.39$, $SE = 0.14$, 95% CI [-0.67 , -0.11] (see Figure 4, Panel B). We then tested whether the effects of

multiculturalism construals were significant at ± 1 SD above and below the mean of political orientation (i.e., liberals and conservatives). Results revealed that for liberals (participants 1 SD below the mean on political orientation), the effects of abstract versus concrete construals of multiculturalism on perceivers' willingness to engage in intergroup contact was not significant, $b = 0.06$, $SE = 0.25$, 95% CI [-0.44 , 0.57]. However, for political conservatives (participants 1 SD above the mean on political orientation), the effects of abstract versus concrete construals of multiculturalism on attitudes toward Hispanic Americans was significant, $b = -0.94$, $SE = 0.25$, 95% CI [-1.44 , -0.44]. Once again, these results suggest that among political conservatives but not among liberals, construing multiculturalism in a concrete rather than abstract manner elicits less desire for intergroup contact.³

Moderated mediation analysis.

Attitudes toward Hispanic Americans. A conditional process analysis (i.e., moderated mediation) was conducted with bias-corrected bootstrapping with 10,000 resamples (Hayes, 2013) to examine the indirect effect of multiculturalism construals and political ideology on prejudice mediated by symbolic threat to national identity. As established before, abstract versus concrete construals of multiculturalism predicted prejudicial attitudes toward Hispanic Americans differently among political conservatives and liberals. Analyses revealed that there was also an interactive effect of multiculturalism construals and political orientation on symbolic threat to national identity, $b = 0.42$, $SE = 0.15$, 95% CI [0.13, 0.71], such that multiculturalism construals impacted prejudicial attitudes among conservatives, $b = 0.93$, $SE = 0.27$, 95% CI [0.39, 1.46], but not liberals, $b = -0.16$, $SE = 0.27$, 95% CI [-0.69 , 0.37]. Finally, a test for moderated mediation revealed that there was a significant difference between conservatives and liberals when we tested the indirect effect of multiculturalism construal on prejudice mediated by symbolic threat to national identity, indirect coefficient = 0.31, $SE = 0.12$, 95% CI [0.11, 0.58] (see conceptual diagram in Figure 5). The indirect effect for political conservatives was significant, indirect coefficient = 0.69, $SE = 0.23$, 95% CI [0.30, 1.19], providing evidence that national identity threat mediated the effect of multiculturalism construal on prejudice among conservatives. However, for political liberals, the indirect effect of multiculturalism construal on prejudice via perceived threat to national identity was not significant, indirect effect = -0.12 , $SE = 0.20$, 95% CI [-0.52 , 0.27]. These findings suggest that when conservatives construe multiculturalism concretely (rather than abstractly), they experience greater

¹ Analyses also revealed a nonsignificant effect of multiculturalism construal on each of the three items on this measure independently ($F_s < 1$, $p_s > .30$).

² Mediation results hold for willingness to engage in close contact as well as casual contact. In particular, there was a significant indirect effect of abstract versus concrete construals of multiculturalism on willingness to engage in close intergroup contact, 95% CI [-0.53 , -0.04], as well as casual intergroup contact, 95% CI [-0.39 , -0.03], through perceived threats to national identity.

³ The same patterns of results emerge when considering desire for close and casual intergroup contact separately. Specifically, political ideology moderated the effects of multiculturalism construals on the desire for close intergroup contact, $b = -0.48$, $SE = 0.17$, $p = .007$, 95% CI [-0.83 , -0.14], and casual intergroup contact, $b = -0.32$, $SE = 0.14$, $p = .02$, 95% CI [-0.59 , -0.05].

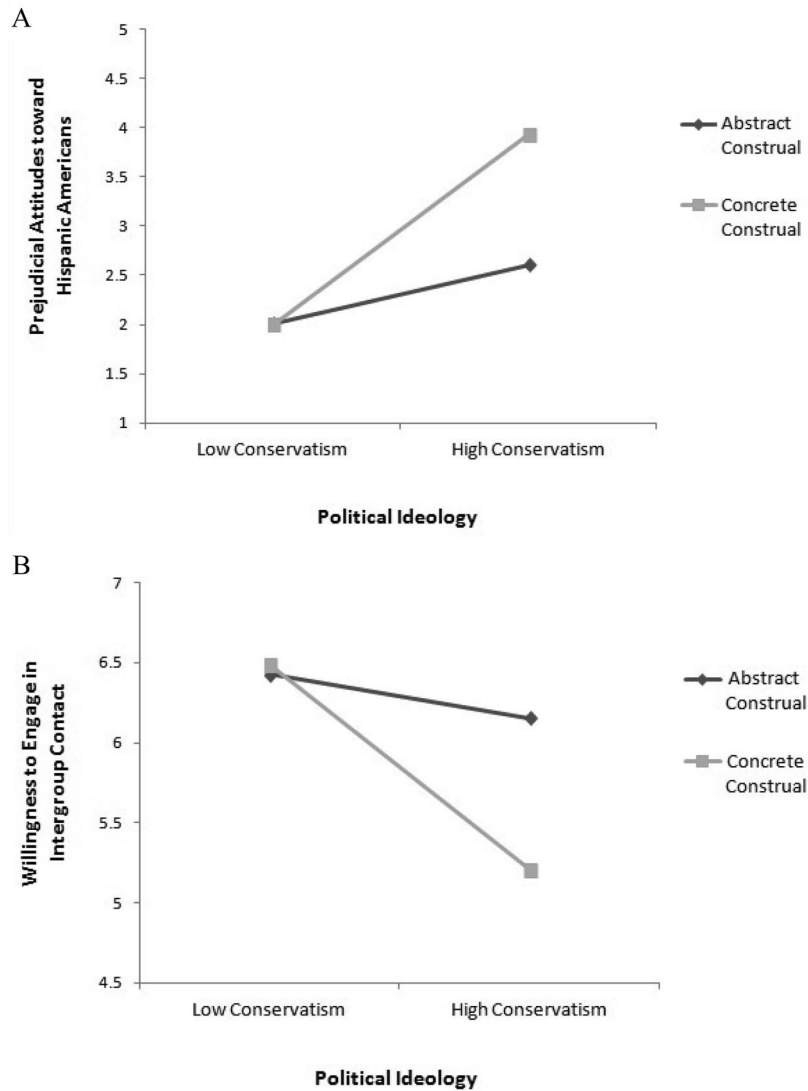


Figure 4. A: Political ideology moderates the effects of abstract versus concrete construals of multiculturalism on prejudicial attitudes toward Hispanic Americans. B: Political ideology moderates the effects of abstract versus concrete construals of multiculturalism on willingness to engage in intergroup contact.

symbolic threat to their national identity, and this threat fuels greater prejudice toward ethnic minorities. However, when liberals engage in the same types of construal they do not express different levels of symbolic threats or prejudice toward ethnic minorities.

Willingness to engage in intergroup contact. A conditional process analysis was conducted to test the indirect effect of multiculturalism construals and political orientation on perceivers' willingness to engage in intergroup contact mediated by symbolic threat to national identity. As established before, abstract versus concrete construals of multiculturalism predicted willingness to engage in intergroup contact differently among political conservatives and liberals. Analyses also revealed a significant interaction between multiculturalism construals and political orientation on symbolic threat to national identity, $b = 0.42$, $SE = 0.15$, 95% CI [0.13, 0.71], such that concrete (vs. abstract) multiculturalism construals elicited more national identity threat among conserva-

tives, $b = 0.93$, $SE = 0.27$, 95% CI [0.39, 1.46], but not among liberals, $b = -0.16$, $SE = 0.27$, 95% CI [-0.69, 0.37]. Finally, a test for moderated mediation revealed that there was a significant difference between political conservatives and liberals in terms of the indirect effect of multiculturalism construal on the desire for intergroup contact mediated by symbolic threat to national identity, indirect effect = -0.11 , $SE = 0.06$, 95% CI [-0.26, -0.02] (see conceptual diagram in Figure 5). The above-mentioned indirect effect was significant for political conservatives, indirect effect = -0.23 , $SE = 0.12$, 95% CI [-0.55, -0.05], providing evidence that the effect of concrete (rather than abstract) construals of multiculturalism elicited more national identity threat, which in turn reduced conservative participants' willingness to engage in intergroup contact. However, for liberals, the equivalent indirect effect was not significant, indirect effect = 0.04 , $SE = 0.07$, 95% CI [-0.07, 0.23]. These findings suggest that concrete construals

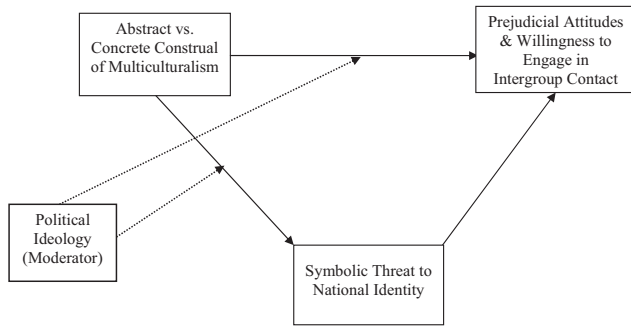


Figure 5. Conceptual diagram of the moderating role of political ideology on the indirect effect of multiculturalism construals on prejudicial attitudes and willingness to engage in intergroup contact via symbolic threat to national identity.

of multiculturalism elicit threat, which in turn fuels prejudice and avoidance of interethnic contact for some types of people more than others, based on individual differences in political orientation.⁴

In sum, using a different construal manipulation, Experiment 3 revealed that even when perceivers are asked instructed to self-generate an abstract or concrete construal of multiculturalism by independently thinking about its broad goals (i.e., why it is important) versus specific steps to achieve it (i.e., how it can be achieved), these construals produce substantially different effects on their attitudes and behavioral intentions toward ethnic minorities. Moreover, these effects depend on perceivers' political orientation. For political conservatives, construing multiculturalism in concrete terms (rather than abstract terms) evoked more prejudice and greater desire for social distancing from Hispanic Americans. One psychological process responsible for these negative attitudes and behavioral intentions is symbolic threat to national identity (rather than realistic threat to national resources). For political liberals, however, construing multiculturalism in abstract or concrete terms did not have differential effects on attitudes and behavioral intentions toward Hispanic Americans or on perceptions of threat.

General Discussion

The present research synthesized four areas of research in the social sciences that have evolved quite separately: social cognitive construal theories, social identity theory, sociological research on the principle-implementation gap, and political psychology work on political orientation. We integrated these literatures to create a new theoretical framework to shed light on three questions about multiculturalism. First, does construing multiculturalism in terms of its broad abstract goals versus its concrete implementation strategies have different effects on majority group members' attitudes toward ethnic minorities and behavioral intentions? Second, if so, what underlying psychological process mediates these effects? That is, are feelings of symbolic threat to national identity aroused by certain types of construals responsible for exacerbating prejudice? Third, do individual differences in perceivers' political orientation arouse differential levels of symbolic threat upon encountering particular construals of multiculturalism, and does this

threat, in turn, exacerbate prejudice against ethnic minorities and social distancing?

Theoretical Contributions

Construals of multiculturalism shift ethnic attitudes and behavioral intentions. Previous research has shown that multiculturalism can sometimes promote intergroup harmony (e.g., Correll et al., 2008; Plaut et al., 2009; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004; Vorauer et al., 2009; Wolsko et al., 2000) and at other times can evoke resistance from majority group members and hinder harmonious intergroup relations (e.g., Ginges & Cairns, 2000; Kaiser & Pratt-Hyatt, 2009; Plaut et al., 2011; Verkuyten, 2009; Vorauer & Sasaki, 2011; Yogeeswaran et al., in press, 2011, 2012). The extant literature raised the unanswered question: What are the conditions that elicit a positive or negative reaction to multiculturalism? The present research addresses this question by identifying one critical moderating variable that matters: the construal or framing of multiculturalism when it is discussed. By utilizing research on psychological construal (Forster, 2009; Freitas et al., 2004; Fujita et al., 2006; Levy et al., 2002; McCrea et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2008; Trope & Liberman, 2010), our data reveal that multiculturalism leads to positive attitudes and desire for contact when majority group members zoom out and reflect on the broad goals of this ideology in abstract terms (i.e., why it is important) but lead to negative attitudes and avoidance of contact when they zoom in and reflect on concrete policies and programs that represent multiculturalism (i.e., how it can be achieved).

Our findings complement and extend prior research on the principle-implementation gap (Dixon et al., 2007, 2010; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Schuman et al., 1997; Tuch & Hughes, 1996) which has demonstrated that Whites can support abstract principles of racial equality while simultaneously opposing concrete policies that help achieve such goals. Although past survey research on this topic documented the gap in attitudes toward abstract principles about racial equality versus concrete policies to promote such equality, it did not address the reason for this gap. Nor did it link the principle-implementation gap to perceivers' attitudes toward and motivation to interact with racial/ethnic minorities who are beneficiaries of these policies. Complementing this literature, the current research experimentally varied whether multiculturalism was construed abstractly or concretely and showed that the former leads to more positive ethnic minority attitudes and behavioral intentions, and the latter leads to more negative attitudes and behavioral intentions.

Symbolic threat to national identity (not realistic threat to national resources) is a psychological mediator. Our data shed light on a psychological process underlying the effect of multiculturalism construals on prejudice and behavioral intentions by demonstrating the role of symbolic threat to national identity. Consistent with prior research that has argued that threat to the uniqueness of one's ingroup increases prejudice (Branscombe et

⁴ When close and casual intergroup contact were considered separately, a test for moderated mediation revealed that there was a significant difference between moderated conservatives and liberals in the indirect effect of multiculturalism construal on the desire for casual intergroup contact mediated by symbolic threat to national identity, 95% CI [-0.26, -0.01]. The parallel effect for close intergroup contact was also significant, 95% CI [-0.31, -0.02].

al., 1999; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000), our studies show that a concrete construal of multiculturalism threatens national identity by raising concerns that diverse cultural values and practices will undermine the uniqueness of one's country. In contrast, an abstract construal of multiculturalism decreases threat to one's national identity because it does not challenge mainstream culture and makes salient only broad inclusive values of multiculturalism. Of interest, multiculturalism construals do not seem to elicit realistic threat in terms of national resources. The distinct role of symbolic (but not realistic) national identity threat is another important contribution of this research, given that past work has sometimes found that multiculturalism is related to both symbolic and realistic threat (e.g., Verkuyten, 2009), whereas other work has found that it is related only to symbolic threat (e.g., Morrison et al., 2010). If we apply our findings to the principle-implementation gap, our results suggest that the gap between people's reactions to abstract principles versus concrete implementation of multicultural ideology can be explained by symbolic threat to national identity in some contexts at least.

Ideological differences in perceivers' political orientation affect reactions to abstract vs. concrete multicultural construals. People may not react similarly to varying construals of multiculturalism. Our data highlight the importance of political orientation in shaping perceivers' reactions toward varying construals of multiculturalism. Building on political psychology research showing that conservatives tend to express greater opposition toward diversity policies (Citrin et al., 2001; Sidanius et al., 1996; Sniderman et al., 2000) and resistance to social change (e.g., Jost et al., 2003) than do to liberals, the present research demonstrates that when political conservatives are asked to consider the concrete steps necessary to achieve multiculturalism (as opposed to the broad goals of multiculturalism), the concrete framing does indeed elicit more threat, which in turn evokes increased prejudice and social distancing. This increased prejudice and social distancing is driven by the fear that diverse cultural values and practices threaten the value, meaning, and distinctiveness of what it means to be American. In comparison, when political liberals are asked to consider the two construals of multiculturalism, their threat perceptions, and their attitudes and behavioral intentions toward ethnic minorities are unaffected.

Our findings suggest that when the core message of multiculturalism is consistent with one's ideological position, asking people to construe multiculturalism abstractly or concretely has little impact on attitudes and behavioral intentions toward ethnic minorities. However, when the core message of multiculturalism is inconsistent with one's ideological position, varying construals to make them concrete rather than abstract has important consequences. These findings about political orientation complement recent work showing that individual differences in RWA (which is correlated to conservatism) moderate the impact of multicultural messages on prejudice toward immigrants (Kauff et al., 2013). Perceivers high in RWA experience greater threat and express more prejudice toward immigrants in response to multicultural ideology than do those low on RWA. Given that RWA and conservatism are positively correlated (e.g., Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Jost et al., 2003), one might expect from the above-mentioned finding that conservatives would respond negatively toward any mention of multiculturalism. However, our data point to an important nuance by suggesting that only when conservatives

concretely consider multiculturalism do they show increased hostility toward ethnic minority groups. In contrast, when political conservatives encounter the broad goals of multiculturalism they do not show increased hostility toward ethnic minority groups because these goals activate inclusive values and principles (see Luguri et al., 2012).

Limitations and Future Directions

As is true of all research, the current work has limitations; however, these limitations point the way to interesting future avenues of work. For example, although the focus of the present research has been to examine how abstract versus concrete construals of multiculturalism affect attitudes and behavioral intentions toward ethnic minorities, it is unclear whether these findings will extend to public policy support and actual behavior. This question is ideal for future work because in order to achieve broader societal change, one needs to extend beyond attitudes and intentions to actual behavior.

Furthermore, although the present research focuses on attitudes and behavioral intentions toward Hispanic Americans in particular, future work should examine whether similar results are obtained for other ethnic minority groups in the U.S. Because Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans are often consciously perceived as less American than White or Black Americans (e.g., Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Devos & Banaji, 2005; Dovidio et al., 2010; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2010; Yogeeswaran et al., 2012), an interesting question is raised: Would the same pattern of results be observed if Asian Americans were used as the target group of interest, but would a different pattern of results be obtained if Black Americans were the target? Future work should explore this question.

And finally, future research might also examine the generalizability of the current research to countries that possess a different model of citizenship. National identity may be defined in terms of a commitment to shared values and ideals, whereby citizenship is granted to any individual who is born in a given country (*jus soli*, or right of soil). Alternatively, national identity may be defined by cultural heritage where citizenship is granted only to individuals who belong to a particular cultural group that originated in the land (*jus sanguines*, or right of blood; Smith, 2001). The U.S. was founded as an immigrant nation that granted citizenship to any individual born on its soil (following the *jus soli* model of citizenship), but it remains an open question whether these results would be replicated in a nation that subscribes to a cultural heritage-based definition of national identity (e.g., Germany, Ireland). The present research provides a starting point for many such intriguing questions that lie at the intersection of multiculturalism and national identity.

Broader Implications

Beyond its theoretical contributions, the current research also has practical implications for debates on how best to balance national unity and ethnic pluralism. Such debates are taking place in many countries around the world. Although multiculturalism has shown great promise in some domains, many obstacles lie in the path of implementation. Our data suggest that people sometimes perceive diversity as threatening to the unity of the nation

and show greater hostility toward ethnic minority groups when they are asked to consider concrete steps necessary to embrace multiculturalism. Yet they may react more positively toward diversity when asked to consider the broad goals of the ideology without probing too deeply into the details. Of importance, this framing distinction matters more among political conservatives than political liberals. This finding suggests that focusing on the broader goals of multiculturalism may be beneficial for individuals regardless of their position on the political spectrum, but focusing on the concrete steps needed to achieve multiculturalism may backfire among conservatives who fear its consequences to the national status quo. This is obviously problematic because concrete policies must be implemented in order to achieve any social change. One solution to this problem may involve promoting concrete policies that reassure political conservatives that multiculturalism is not changing the very essence of the national group by including the perspective of their ethnic ingroup as well (cf. Plaut et al., 2011). Future research should explore the impact of portraying concrete multicultural policies while explicitly reassuring conservatives that their group is included within this framework.

In recent years, politicians, educators, academic scholars, and average citizens from various quarters have voiced opinions as to whether adopting multicultural policies will promote national unity or disintegrate the nation. Our data suggest that the political orientation of perceivers and how they construe multicultural ideology shape their opinions and reactions toward the ideology. The present data also help us understand the types of threat people experience when considering multiculturalism. Such knowledge can help explain diverging opinions on various hot button issues relating to ethnic diversity, such as immigration, multicultural education, the celebration of cultural events, the use of non-English languages, and the use of ethnic or religious clothing in larger society.

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